

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 1242

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PA

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT STROESSNER OPENS 1975 SESSION OF
PARAGUAYAN CONGRESS

REF: ASUNCION A-026, MARCH 24, 1975; AND ASUNCION 0807

1. IN AN EVENT UNREMARKABLE EXCEPT FOR A BOYCOTT BY THE
MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY, PRESIDENT ALFREDO STROESSNER
DELIVERED HIS ANNUAL "STATE OF THE UNION" ADDRESS AT THE
APRIL 1 OPENING OF THE 1975 SESSION OF THE PARAGUAYAN CONGRESS.

2. CONSPICUOUS BY THEIR ABSENCE, MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION
RADICAL LIBERAL PARTY (PLR) MADE GOOD THEIR EARLIER THREAT
TO BOYCOTT THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS OF THE JOINT SESSION IN
PROTEST AGAINST THE CONTINUING DETENTION OF A PLR DIRECTORATE
MEMBER WHO WAS ARRESTED UNDER STATE OF SIEGE PROVISIONS
(SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY) SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. THE MINUSCULE
OPPOSITION "LEVI-LIBERALS" (PL) WHICH CONSIDERS THE PLR
AS COMMUNIST INFILTRATED WAS CONSPICUOUSLY PRESENT AT THE
SESSION. PL PRESIDENT, SENATOR CARLOS LEVI RUFFINELLI,
PARTICIPATED IN THE INAUGURAL SESSION'S RECEPTION LINE--
THE LONE OPPOSITION FIGURE IN A GROUP DOMINATED BY THE
ADMINISTRATION'S COLORADO PARTY.

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4. PREDICTABLY, PRESIDENT STROESSNER IGNORED THE PLR'S

ABSENCE. HE DID HOWEVER REFER INDIRECTLY TO THE FEBRUARY 8 RAID BY GOP SECURITY FORCES ON AN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNE AT JEJUI (ASUNCION A-206 AND 0807) AND THE EXPULSION OF TWO SPANIARDS FOR ALLEGEDLY USING SUBVERSIVE TEXTS IN A PAROCHIAL SCHOOL AT TUNA. IN THESE REFERENCES, THE PRESIDENT REAFFIRMED THE REGIME'S DETERMINATION TO EXTIRPATE WHATEVER IT CONSIDERS COMMUNISTIC OR "THIRD WORLD" INFLUENCES, WHEREVER FOUND IN PARAGUAY.

4. THE PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY SKIRTED THE CONTINUING INFLATION (RUNNING ABOUT 20 PERCENT) AND EMPHASIZED THE POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST YEAR. THE PRESIDENT REPORTED FAVORABLE AGRICULTURAL HARVESTS, A HEALTHY BUDGET SURPLUS, A 36 PERCENT INCREASE IN TAX COLLECTIONS AND A 56 PERCENT INCREASE IN PARAGUAY'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES TO \$82.2 MILLION. (PARAGUAY'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES, INCREASED BY \$30 MILLION IN 1974 DESPITE A TRADE BALANCE DEFICIT OF \$4.2 MILLION. THE RESERVE POSITION IMPROVEMENT WAS MADE LARGELY BY LINE-OF-CREDIT FINANCING FOR A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF PARAGUAY'S IMPORTS FROM ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL).

5. COMMENT: THE BOYCOTT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY THE PLR WAS LARGELY MEANINGLESS AND LIKELY TO BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE INsofar AS SPEEDING THE RELEASE OF THE IMPRISONED PLR DIRECTORATE MEMBER IS CONCERNED. NEVERTHELESS IT WILL CAUSE TALK WHICH IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE NEW AND MORE IMAGINATIVE PLR LEADERSHIP UNDER ITS YOUTHFUL LEFT-WING PRESIDENT, DEPUTY DOMINGO LAINO. THE FUTILE AND SOMEWHAT PATHETIC GESTURE BY THE PLR ALSO SERVED TO INDICT THE SPLINTER LEVI-LIBERALS BEFORE THE PUBLIC AS A TOOL OF THE REGIME.
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